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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the utility of an ethnographic method that incorporates various participant observation techniques in providing information about family television viewing. It presents arguments for a naturalistic case study approach focusing on family-media interaction and suggests three methods of data collection: interviews and followups; a battery of surveys and a television diary; and observations of selected variables in the home, including physical settings and viewing arrangements, rules and control of viewing situations, personal activity and overall media usage profiles, visual and auditory competencies, and demographics. The paper contends that these measures provide three "windows" for variable analysis that help to verify and lend support to findings. A procedural calendar outlines specific procedures and examples for data collection. (Author/RL)

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FAMILIES AND TELEVISION: GUIDELINES FOR AN ETHNOGRAPHIC PROCEDURE

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the utility of an ethnographic method, incorporating various participant observation techniques, in providing information about family television viewing. The considerations of this paper are methodologically based, and outline specific procedures and examples for data collection. No generalizations are made as to family televiewing situations. Arguments for a naturalistic case-study approach focusing on family-media interacts are provided.

Three measures are suggested for data collection: (1) interviews and follow-ups, (2) a battery of surveys and a television diary, and (3) observations for selected variables in the home. These measures provide three "windows" for variable analysis. Such triangulation helps to verify and lend support to the findings. The variables under examination include physical settings and viewing arrangements, rules and control of viewing situations, personal activity and overall media usage profiles, visual and auditory competencies, and demographics.

Presented to the Theory and Methodology Division, Association for Education in Journalism Annual Convention, Houston, Texas, August 1979.

Introduction

For over two decades media researchers have examined the impact of television on our society. They have focused on television's role as an agent for successful marketing of goods and services, consumer socialization, social learning, and even as a potential purveyor of social mores, good and/or evil. Interestingly, very little has been done to document the uses of television as they actually occur within the most common environment of TV audiences, the family.

This paper examines the role of television within the social setting of the family. Arguments for a naturalistic case-study approach of the family media interact are provided. The course for these arguments is developmental, covering first the present direction of inquiry for much of the research focusing on family-media settings. The impetus for this paper stems from concern on this researcher's part toward much of the previous research focusing on the family-media interact. At the root of this concern is the predominating nature of current information available from journals or scholarly papers. Examination of behavior in the family setting, as this paper will show, requires consideration of a multitude of ever-changing phenomena. Such phenomena are not necessarily manifested in neat and predictable patterns over time in the household. Much of the existing literature reviewed in this paper circumvents this problem by constructing convenient variables or typologies prior to data collection. The premise of this paper suggests that, prior to the imposing of models for theory testing in the social setting, researchers must first step back from various paradigmatic frameworks and come to terms with the elementary and complex components that go into the consideration of the social setting under examination.

Hence the concerns of this paper are methodological, and ask the reader's patience (and help) in construction of the theoretical underpinnings and consequent procedural guide for the study of families and television. The intended outcome of this and other procedures would be to acquire baseline data. From this data, researchers could then begin to construct preliminary theoretical frameworks for the many engaging phenomena inherent to the televiewing setting of the American family. The ultimate objective of this undertaking is to identify and add to a growing set of parameters which could then be set into more familiar frameworks of variable analysis and hypothesized relationships. This paper will not provide a customary conclusions section, revealing new theoretical propositions. Nor will it attempt to test existing theories from media research about the family-televiewing setting. These exercises would be premature given the absence of a coherent guide to raw data collection. Hopefully the result of this methodological proposal, and no doubt, future modified versions will provide for the discipline a systematic and replicable guide for the development of a compendium of case studies.

The following analysis: (1) reviews the existing literature and methodologies adressing the family-media process; (2) discusses the ramifications of existing research; (3) establishes criteria for alternative means of focus for family and television interacts; and, (4) suggests procedures for one such alternative.

Past Research

The review of literature provides a stepping-stone for the presentation and consideration of methodological alternatives that are argued for within this paper. Previous literature on the family and television interact will first be reviewed, followed by discussion of the methodological assumptions

underlying these existing studies. The nature of the family-media interact and its ramifications for research will then be discussed, followed by suggestions for ethnological procedures and their adaptability to the study of these interactions. This section concludes with a discussion of existing ethnologically based literature focusing on mediated behavior within the family.

The Family and Television

Previous literature on television in the family setting has addressed parental influence on adolescent viewing. Barcus (1968) provided a review of literature, now of course dated, examining the efficacy of the television industry's argument that responsibility for controlling viewing behavior rests with parents. He cites evidence indicating that less than half of the parents queried exercise any control of television viewing in the home. When control is exercised, it addresses times for, or duration of, viewing rather than control of television content. Barcus noted that earlier studies of the family viewing process fail to consider relevant variables including parental personality, child rearing attitudes, attitudes toward television, and television viewing habits.

From his own pilot study of 44 mothers, Barcus developed a model of the parental influence of television viewing. This model of types of parental control can be portrayed as containing two separate areas; positive control, both formal and informal, which includes those acts of selecting, screening, and praising for things learned from teleivision, and in negative controls, both formal and informal, which include restrictions, scoldings, and shutting off the set.

From the testimonies of mothers categorized into various segments of his model, parents appear to exercise greater influence on children's viewing than had previously been demonstrated. Reasons for this parental control fell

into two categories: (1) that the child might be adversely affected by premature exposure to the adult world, and (2) the general belief that the child has better things to do than watch television. Barcus also proposed that parents might exert control because they themselves are often embarrassed by programming content they see with their children, and they they fear they will lose their power of control as parents.

Barcus concluded that parental control of television viewing has not been successful from his viewpoint because parents generally have positive attitudes toward television and feel their children derive more good then bad from programming.

Chaffee, McLeod, and Atkin (1971) attempted to divide television families into types by their communicative characteristics. Specifically, they examined the influence of parents and parent-child relations on the uses the child "makes" of the mass media. The authors based their approach on the evidence of Greenberg and Dominick (1968) and Hess and Goldman (1962) who found that parents took an active part in program decision-making in about 30% of all families interviewed. Chaffee, McLeod and Atkin (1971) assessed the social factors and, specifically, the parents' communicatory style when using the media. They examined both the parent's own use of the media and the indirect effects of media consumption based on interactions with the child. Their findings indicated that parental examples of media use do not necessarily provide models for children to emulate. Secondly, they found that children generalize to the structure and not to the content of parent-child communication.

The authors constructed a four-fold typology of family communication patterns. Their findings indicated that children of "pluralistic" families who emphasize the development of strong and variable concept relations and who are free of social constraints are more worldly and use the media as an

information source. Children from "consensual" homes, those in which adoption of parents' ideas and values are encouraged, are also exposed to worldly controversy, but are reminded by parents of existing social norms. Children from consensual homes are also seekers of information from the media, but appear to derive less content from it. The authors argue that, while the family communication structure appears to cause differences in socioeconomic and political development, the influence of the mass media as internal or external determinants remains to be investigated.

The effect of television's presence, or its absence, on family conversation was examined by Walters and Stone (1971). The impetus for this study stemmed from the work by McDonaugh (1950), who labeled the nature of communicative style with the presence of television as "parallel" rather than "interactive." From this notion the authors looked for changes in family interact patterns 20 years later. They hypothesized that, as the availability of television decreased in the home, interpersonal communication within the family would increase. Note should be taken that the study dealt with decreased availability and not absence of television in homes. The study evolved as one of opinions and reports expressed by family members rather than actual observations of family behavior. This was due to the authors' inability to acquire a suitable number of homes without television.

Fifty percent of the families interviewed indicated that little or no talking went on concurrent with watching television. The finding is in agreement with Maccoby's (1951), that television seems to create communicative behavior more parallel than interactive. This occurrence has interesting implications about television's influence on the family-interact process over a 20-year span.

Only 13% of the families interviewed felt that conversation actually increased while watching television. Approximately 30% interviewed felt that television had no effect at all. It appeared that the presence of television induced one-way (parallel rather than interpersonal/interactive) communication. Sixty percent of all families interviewed indicated that television provided information, entertainment, and relaxation. Limited support was provided in the study to indicate that the availability of television decreases inter-familial communication. The authors speculated that only with the complete absence of television will the volume of family communication increase.

Summary

The studies reviewed in this section set out to isolate and discuss selected phenomenon within the family-media interact process. Some have examined the social setting in which television is incorporated, isolating models of parental control or communication style as they influence children's viewing behaviors. Other research has focused on the influence of television within the home setting, with emphasis on television's relation to the amount and nature of communication among family members. Research on television viewing and family behavior has provided far more questions than answers. The methods incorporated by these researchers often have been guided by hypotheses designed to test the occurrence of detrimental television content effects. These accounts have chosen to isolate a singular phenomenon (i.e., parental control, specific television content influence, etc.), and gather data on variables perceived to affect their outcome. These studies also fail to consider the notion that mediated behavior is a relational type of activity composed of interrelated rather than opposing variables; this will be dealt with in the section which follows. This is not to say that previous research with focus on families and television is without utility. The

author was careful to glean possible directions for inquiry (variables) in his own proposal and consequent study during compilation of the review of literature. Of particular interest were the findings by Chaffee, McCleod, and Atkin (1971). Their recognition and study of environmental factors operating within various households, including parents' communicative style, provided much of the groundwork for this ethnographic proposal.

"Discrete Variable" Versus "Process" Methodology

The questions which emerge out of past research on the family-media setting seem to point to the methodologies employed rather than specific findings. Familial use of television (indeed, all television viewing) seems to suggest an ongoing process. Research examining the operations of this process as a process has been sparse. The selected variables of inquiry by previous authors fail to encompass the entire picture of the mediated social setting of the family. An argument favoring "process" methodology over a static examination of "discrete" variables follows.

Media research has sought to isolate identifiable independent variables and treat them within an effects, categorical, or "uses and gratifications" paradigm, whether in experimental manipulation or through survey questionnaires and interviews. Identification of such clear-cut variables as applied to the family setting is extremely difficult due to the overwhelming complexity of simultaneously operating influence variables. Soloski and Daly elaborate upon this notion:

> The complexities of interaction within human group life are likely to be masked and obfuscated by these variables. The irony is that the attractiveness of variable analysis--discrete, clear-cut, and unitary variables with their ease of manipulation leads to a glossing over of what is really going on in human group life. (1977, p. 2)

The argument that classical scientific methodology focuses on a static state rather than the ongoing process of social life serves as the focal

point of this paper. The intent here is to argue for and provide an additional method to facilitate an understanding of the social context of the family in which television plays a significant role. Theoretical groundings for these alternatives are not new. Blumer (1972) stated:

> The conventional procedure is to identify something which is presumed to operate on group life and treat it as an independent variable and then to select some form of group activity as the dependent variable. The independent variable is put at the beginning part of the process of interpretation and the dependent variable at the terminal part of the process. The intervening process is ignored or, what amounts to the same thing, taken for granted as something that need not be considered. . .Where process is recognized, its study is regarded as a problem that is independent of the relation between variables. (pp. 97-98)

The act of media consumption is a phenomenon unique to each individual. People apparently use the media to their own ends and perhaps by their own rules. While traditional mass communication research has recognized media use as an ongoing function, past investigations have not treated television viewing as a dynamic process. Existing measures focus on either one minute act or several measured in a single point in time, rather than identifying the interplay of many elements and their changing levels that compose media usage. Media usage is clearly not a discrete event, and therefore, it seems ill-suited to categorization or global generalities. The point is <u>not</u> to downgrade the multitude of experimental and survey methods; rather, it serves to suggest that alternatives to this approach are desireable, even essential, to support the traditional quantitative method of measuring mediated behavior.

Glaser and Strauss examine the interplay of quantitative and qualitatve methodologies stating:

> There is no fundamental class between the purposes and capacities of qualitative and quantitative methods or data. What clash there is concerns the primacy of emphasis on verification or generation of theory--to which heated discussions on qualitative

> data have been linked historically. Primacy depends only on the circumstances of research on the interests and training of the researcher, and on the kinds of material he needs for his theory. (1967, pp. 17-18)

This paper argues that deriving information from family and television settings requires the use of both familiar survey and experimental methods as well as techniques which are more qualitative in nature.

While many mass communication researchers have recognized that media use is a changing process, existing methodologies in the social sciences are not really equipped to assess a host of variables operating simultaneously, over time, with some aspects in cycles (certain conditions occur over and over and yield repeated responses) and others developmental in nature. In fact, most multivariate statistical tools are just being adopted for either a large number of variables at a fixed point in time (a clearly defined snapshot) or fewer variables in time series at large intervals with less clarity (a series of photos with low resolution). Even time series analyses have yet to come to grips with the basic needs of determining: (1) the optimal intervals for the series (i.e., how often do measurements need to be taken?); (2) the total range of variables operating in a given situation; (3) successful measurement of all salient variables; (4) approximations of change occuring among many variables, some simultaneously. The point is, simply, recognizing process and dealing with it in research designs are two quite different tasks. Non-process research in media, however, has made a substantial contribution to identifying important variables and relationships which require study in a process-oriented investigation.

The Family-Media Interact

Mass media are an integral part of our social system. Manipulation of these media contributes to many aspects of the human interaction process.

What better way to examine this interaction than through its identification within the mediated social setting of the family. As Lull proposed:

> Television and other mass media, rarely mentioned as vital sources in the construction of maintenance of interpersonal relations, can be seen to play a central role in the methods which families and other social units employ purposefully to interact within their own special everyday realities. (1978, p. 5)

Lull goes on to argue that people use media in the home to facilitate the maintenance of any number of subsets of behavior having useful applications. This social use of the media he referred to as "audience ethnomethods" (Lull, 1978, p. 5). Lull suggested that people tend to maximize control of their environments and consequently that people use the media to organize and control their lives. If true, this notion provides a new perspective for the researcher interested in isolating clear-cut examples of the organizing process inherent within human behavior, and has visible manifestations within the home setting.

Ethnomethodology

The term ethnomethodology originates from the work in sociology by Garfinkel. He defined ethnomethodology as "the investigation of the rational properties of indexical expressions and other practical actions as contingent ongoing accomplishments or organized artful practices of everyday life" (Garfinkel, 1967, p. 11). Noting the possible ambiguity of this definition Garfinkel chose to elaborate his meanings in a more recent colloquium:

> We are concerned with how society gets put together; the how it is getting done; the how to do it; the social structure of everyday activities. I would say we are doing studies of how persons, as parties to ordinary arrangements, use the features of the arrangement to make for members the visibly organized characteristics happen. (Garfinkel, 1968, p. 12)

An ethnological study of family television viewing, then, would involve examination of the process by which family members incorporate and articulate the use of media into their daily activities.

A number of reference guides for the "doing" of social settings research are available. Of particular utility is the work of John Lofland. He provided an excellent methodological grounding in Analyzing Social Settings (Lofland, 1971), and a more recent follow-up providing useful examples of case study approaches in Doing Social Life (Lofland, 1976). Another practical field guide is provided in Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods (Bogdan and Taylor, 1975). In addition, there are a number of actual case study approaches examining various family settings. For example, Henry provided narratives of five families containing emotionally ill members in Pathways to Madness (Henry, 1965), and Lewis provided a case study approach on Mexican families of various socio-economic levels in Five Families (Lewis, 1959).

Obtrusiveness of Measures

One reoccurring argument against the case-study approach has been the perceived obtrusiveness of the researcher when entering the social setting. As Lull (1978) pointed out:

> The method, when applied to the study of television's primary audience, requires that the researcher enter the natural domain of his subjects--the family home. The willingness and abilities of the researcher are strongly tested by the prospect of this intrusion into such a small and private social unit. (p. 9)

This author has now entered into such a "natural domain" three times in the collection of data on families (Anderson, et. al., 1979). Firsthand experience would indicate that family members adjust quite rapidly to the presence of a stranger in their midst. While family members ponder their personal schedules and accessibility to the researcher's needs, the

family's customary activities in the home prevail. Changes undoubtedly occur, but strongly established patterns of mediated behavior appear to continue to occur as in an undisturbed condition.

Ethnological Literature of Family-Media Interacts

Ethnological approaches to the study of media and family viewing are few. What documentation does exist could be classified as more theoretical than applied in nature. Existing work has provided the theoretical impetus and argument for alternative approaches to the study of mediated settings. Little work, however, has been completed to initiate the next logical step of designing systematic procedures for studying media in the natural setting of the home. Soloski and Daly (1977) provided an extensive review of symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodological literature that they feel should be taken into consideration when one is doing qualitative research in the social sciences. These authors provide useful theoretical guidelines for the researcher who is examining an identified segment of everyday life.

To date, Lull stands as the discipline's most active and prolific ethnographer of television and family viewing. His doctoral dissertation, An Ethnography of Selected Wisconsin Families and Their Mediated Habits (1976), is one of the most significant attempts to document the use of television within natural settings. More recently, Lull (1978) has provided the field with a review of the underlying assumptions he feels should be considered when doing ethnomethods of television viewers. Lull's work represents a useful transition between underlying theoretical assumptions and the "doing" of ethnographic procedures in the field.

Anderson, Meyer, and Donohue (1978), argue for a marriage between the inductive models of ethnomethodology with the discipline's more

traditional form of inferential statistics. They argue that the weaknesses of qualitative procedures can be systematically strengthened by the combined use of complementary quantitative procedures.

Bechtel, Achelpohl, and Akers (1972) attempted to identify correlates between observed behavior and questionnaire responses. Part of their procedure employed the actual use of video equipment for observation within the home. Their experiment was flawed by continual recording equipment failure, consequently many of their findings are suspect. They do conclude, however, that television watching is not a singular behavior but encompasses many other family activities, individual as well as group. This suggested again that television viewing is a complex interrelation between many forms of behavior.

Qualitative study of family and television interacts stands ready to emerge from its rudimentary foundations. Much of the limited research in this area is more speculative than theoretical. Hence, we are in short supply of documented case studies based on field reports. Recent efforts by the author have been directed toward synthesizing and refining the procedures for doing ethnological studies of television usage within the natural setting of the home. These efforts provide much of the groundwork and direction for this paper.

Procedure

The procedure suggested in this paper incorporates techniques suitable for a case study of media usage within a family setting. The procedure for these techniques is presented within a participant observation scheme suggested by Becker (1970). The sociological model provided by Becker distinguishes four stages: (1) establish predetermined parameters for observation; (2) make preliminary observations of those selected behaviors

to identify the conditions under which they occur, (3) postulate hypotheses concerning the relationship among variables; and, (4) confirm or disconfirm those hypotheses through a suitable display of data gathered from various measurement techniques.

Parameters for Data Collection

The first step of the procedure requires selection of phenomenon representing the social setting under consideration. Certain classifications of phenomena of interst to the author will receive focus. These, in essence, are the "variables" under examination. These variables, or phenomena, are believed fundamental for an ethnological study of the family television viewing audience. Perhaps a more appropriate label for these variables are those elements contained within the family setting which contribute in part to the "doing" of television. These elements should not be considered exclusive or exhaustive, but provide the parameters for this paper. The variables under consideration include:

Proxemics. These are the spatial dimensions around which viewing is performed. Broad considerations as to the relationship among family living space utilization, physical positioning of the television(s), and family viewing are included.

Perceived Rules for and Control of Set Use. This variable examines the subject's testimonies and behaviors surrounding rules and conditions governing the use of television within the home. Rules and conditions of control can be further broken down into two characteristics: (1) formal rules established by various members of the household, and (2) instances which exhibit a family member's control of programming. Formal rules include parental guidelines for viewing, encompassing times for or duration of programming and program content. Control of programming refers to the

family decision-making process. The intent here is to provide information on the norms, or scenarios for viewing that operate within the television household.

Patterns of Viewing Behavior. Viewing behavior refers to those program and content preferences of individual family members. Also under scrutiny are the actual viewing "styles" exhibited by each family member in an attempt to derive conclusions as to how each family member uses television.

Family Member's Daily Activity Profile. This entails identification of each family member's blend of family, peer group, school, work, organization, and miscellaneous daily activities. This variable includes recognition of differences between weekday and weekend profiles. Of major concern within this variable is analysis of how television viewing fits into the daily activities of each family member. Data from this area of inquiry help to determine those daily periods when television viewing is not possible or might be an alternative for other activities. Also of interest would be a determination of the outside influences, i.e., peers, institutions, school, etc., have on the selection of programming.

Media Profile. Media consumption other than television would be systematically charted. This should be performed in an attempt to identify the role alternative media have within the subject's daily activities. This would include the frequency of use for print, radio, film, and prerecorded music. The intent here is to determine the overall degree of media usage within the family setting.

Visual and Auditory Competencies. Selected parts of the Detroit Tests of Learning Aptitude (1967), would be administered to family members aged two to 17 in an attempt to check their visual and auditory competencies. Results from these standardized tests which indicate high or low scores

based on normative age-level requirements would be noted. The purpose of this variable is to safeguard the detection of any handicaps which could influence a family member's media consumption behavior. Valuable determinants of viewing behaviors by developmental level might also be gained.

Demographics. Standard demographic data would be included in the procedure. Information would include the age, sex, and educational level of each family member. A determination of the socioeconomic status of the family would also be included. The inclusion of this variable serves a two-fold purpose: (1) to provide standard information for other researchers interested in comparing similar or dissimilar family compositions, and (2) to provide the groundwork for family viewing situations characterized by demographic differences.

Preliminary Observations

Having accomplished the initial definition of parameters of observation, the researcher must then decide which elements of behavior within the social setting warrant inclusion as the major focal points of the study. This paper has already determined those selected variables which will receive attention in a final analysis stage. Thus, the focusing process can be accomplished by checks on the frequency and distribution of phenomena over time and through observation via various measures. Of interest to this researcher is the manner in which selected media phenomena manifest themselves and, more important to this cause, whether the measurement devices utilized are adequate for ethnological study.

Measures

The procedure for data collection suggests the deployment of three measurement techniques: (1) interviews, (2) survey methods, and (3) observation.

The manner in which data are provided from these different measures provides the base for theory testing of each selected variable. Phenomena deemed typical and widespread on the basis of the measures employed would be closely examined to determine how such events are distributed among the family and individual family members. The researcher has reason to believe that a specific phenomenon was characteristic of a given process if it appeared in many different ways. An example of this is to have a certain phenomenon described from group or individual testimonies and then be able to observe the same phenomenon within the social setting. The attention now focuses on the aspects of each measure, the specific information each technique would be designed to provide, and the manner in which the collected data are recorded.

Interviews

Interviews would be initiated at the onset of the data collection period. Baseline data are gathered from these interviews in order to provide initial stages of theory testing suggested within the participant-observation model. Interviews would focus on information for four of the seven variables under consideration: (1) rules and control of set use, (2) viewing patterns, (3) activity profiles, and (4) demographics.

Interviews for these variables will be conducted one-on-one with the researcher. The interview will be recorded by the use of a portable cassette system. Both the researcher's line of questioning and the subject's answers would then be transcribed verbatim. Pretesting of the questions for interviews with previous families have revealed some difficulty in gathering information from children seven years and younger. It is suggested that a technique be incorporated whereby the researcher initiate a game with the child in which the researcher assumed the role

of the child in the household. Such a ploy was initiated by something like, "Now Roxanne, let's imagine for a moment that I am you . . . and I've just gotten up this morning. What do I do next?" The child would then be encouraged to continue with the game and provide a scenario of his/her daily activities, the activities of their parents, etc.

Data for the demographic variable would be collected at the onset of these interview sessions.

Survey Methods

Survey methods would be used to gather further baseline data and information for three of the seven categories under consideration: (1) viewing patterns, (2) media profiles, and (3) visual and auditory competencies.

The measures within this section would contribute substantially to knowledge of viewing patterns and behaviors. Also provided would be data on alternative media consumption patterns. "Program Preferences" and "Program Awareness" questionnaires (both filled out by each family member), and the "Television Diary" kept by the family could be the survey instruments used for data collection. Those family members too young to read would have appropriate questions read to them and their answers would be recorded for them by the researcher.

The three survey instruments are used to determine viewing patterns. A diary of viewing for each television would first be completed by the family. From this, information is derived to complete the program preferences survey. To safeguard the validity of information for this variable, the awareness questionnaire then follows. This questionnaire is administered in an attempt to exhaust the family member's knowledge of available programming.

The "Rules and Control of Set Use" questionnaire would also examine the personal uses of media for each family. A charting of media usage for each one-hour day part could then be accomplished for radio, newspaper, and magazines. Children too young to read and write would work with the researcher to determine these alternative media patterns. Use of records, tapes, and types of preferred music formats would be included within this section. The frequency for and types of films preferred by each family member would also be established within this section.

Scores of auditory and visual competency are derived from the Detroit Tests of Learning Aptitude (1967).

Observation

The final technique of data collection requires supplying of observable phenomena from actual television viewing periods. Specific times for observation, derived from interview and survey data, would focus on five of the seven variables under scrutiny: (1) proxemics, (2) rules and control of set use, (3) patterns of viewing, (4) activity profiles, and (5) media profiles. For example, time segments for observation of viewing behaviors would be teased from data supplied from television diaries and the programming preference questionnaire. The technique of observation seeks to confirm or enlighten the growing interrelationships of data.

Upon completion of each observation session, the researcher would expand notes into narrative form and relate how those actions apply to the variable under consideration. These narratives would be discussion-like in format and are continuously enriched with data from the other two measures. Immediate impressions are generally the purpose of this stage of data collection.

Confirmation

The confirmation stage of procedure constitutes the final phase of field study. This procedural stage requires analytic structures which dictate how various data are treated and assigned to each variable. Three manners of hypothesizing are suggested for deriving conclusions as to the social setting in question:

> (1) Complex statements of the necessary and sufficient conditions for the existence of some phenomenon. . . . (2) Statements that some phenomenon is an 'important' or 'basic' element in the organization. Such conclusions when elaborated usually point to the fact that this phenomenon exercises a persistent and continuing influence on diverse events. . . . (3) Statements identifying a situation as an instance of some process or a phenomenon described more abstractly in sociological theory. Theories posit relations between many abstractly defined phenomena, and conclusions of this kind imply that relationships posited in generalized form hold in this particular instance. (Becker, 1970, pp. 407-408)

Questions directing the inquiry of each variable must be provided to assure systematic discussion of each. Note should be taken that the line of inquiry provided for each variable is by no means exhaustive, but provides information basic to the understanding of family media usage.

Questions for Inquiry

Proxemics. The focus of analysis includes: What are the traffic patterns for people in the home? Does the positioning of the television sets provide for an open or limited viewing area? Are other designated spaces for family activity designed to facilitate or exclude television viewing? Is television location permanent or transitory? Can various television sets (if a multiple TV home) be characterized by particular or alternative viewing arrangements? How does screen size and the presence or absence of color picture influence the priority given to each set in the home?

Perceived rules and control of set use. Questions for consideration include: Does the family have household rules for watching television? How are these rules displayed? Are they in reference to the amount, time period for, or content of programming? Are these rules constantly maintained, reiterated, or adapted to different viewing situations? Are these rules followed by those for whom they are intended? Is television utilized by family members as an incentive for certain behaviors? Is television used as a bartering agent or manipulated as a form of punishment? Do family members' perceptions of their own viewing habits differ from those of other family members? What role do various family members have in influencing when and what will be watched? What characterizes the decision-making process for daily viewing by family members? Who decides what will be watched? Is this process altered when only one, two, three, or all family members are present?

Patterns of viewing behavior. How many hours of television does each family member average during a week period? What types of programming does each family member watch? Is program selection a happenstance or predetermined activity? Is programming selected with the aid of program schedules, or is it more random in nature? What are the overlaps of viewing by various family members? Do conflicts arise over selected programming? How are these conflicts resolved? To what degree are family members familiar with all available programming? How does each family member watch television? Is their attention to programming characterized by shared or exclusive viewing behaviors?

Daily activity profiles. Direction of inquiry stems from a few basic questions: What are the times each family member is available for television viewing? Is there any pattern to each family member's activities? Are these activities random or do they follow a predictable schedule?

Media profile. Are the uses of alternative media in the family fixed or random? Is there any similarity in the content of alternative media to the television programming content preferred by each family member? Are the uses of alternative media a primary or secondary behavior? How does the use of alternative media break down in terms of actual time spent? What is each family member's primary media source for news and information?

Visual and auditory competencies. What are the visual and auditory scores for each child in the family aged two to 17? What are the apparent differences in television viewing based on developmental stage as exhibited by the test scores?

Demographics. Questions for this basic variable include: How does the size of the family appear to relate to viewing in the home setting? How does economic status relate to the decision-making process for viewing television in the home? How does the education level of the parent(s) appear to relate to the decision-making process which determines viewing?

Verification

The final stage of this procedure involves the process of confirming or disconfirming the direction of inquiry for each variable. The researcher's role is to refine preliminary models of phenomena taking into account the evidence gained from various measures. The intent within the verification process is to increase the accuracy of conclusions based on data. It is from the verification of models that the researcher can begin to construct an overall model of the social setting in question (Lindesmith, 1952).

The procedural model incorporated has thus progressed from: (1) identification of those phenomena under examination, (2) the introduction of

measurement techniques deemed suitable for "getting at" various phenomena, and (3) the course of inquiry for each variable. What follows then, as item (4), is the criteria for each question (hypothesis) within each variable. Specifics for each question contained in this last section require that the phenomena under scrutiny qualify as having a relation to that variable. Certainly, some phenomena under examination will prove to bear on more than one variable. Cases where this occurs would also be discussed within the results section of the study. The next section will specifically address the conditions in which each question might be answered. The reader should bear in mind that the criterion for meeting each condition is by no means exhaustive.

Verification Criteria

Proxemics. A mapping technique of the floorplan of the home (to scale) would be used to depict all areas of the home with a field of view of television sets. Viewing areas and arrangements of furniture would also be noted. The positioning patterns family members exhibited in relation to the set(s) would be recorded.

Traffic patterns of family members would be provided through observation and these mapping techniques. Possible "people patterns" would be apparent from the floorplan and by the researcher's observations of actual movements by family members around the home. The scope of viewing areas and whether other activity areas facilitated viewing would be treated in a similar manner. The mobility or permanence of the television set(s) could be determined through direct observation by the researcher and would be supplemented by data from interviews with subjects. Priorities given to each television based on screen size and the existence of color (if the family had both color and black and white sets) would be determined to have an affect when

subjects identified color or screen size as a determinant of their viewing location preferences. This information might be articulated through any or all of the measures utilized.

Perceived rules and control of set use. Existence of rules concerning household use of television would be asked specifically of each family member during interviews. Motivations for rule setting could also be determined within the interview format. The manner in which rules manifest themselves within the social setting are taken up within observation periods. Elements of conversation which include indices such as "eight o'clock, time for bed," or "No!, you're not going to watch 'Soap!'," would be included in data collection and considered appropriate cues to rule structures or acts of control directed toward television usage. Perceived shifts in the degree of regulation for television viewing would be noted as indices of inconsistency for rule setting. Elements of disclosure within interviews or conversations observed within the setting which make specific references to rules for viewing would be duly noted. Specific mention of those references to rule-structures based on degree (amount), time periods, or content of programming would be included. The manner in which family members (with a focus on children) responded to actual rule-setting would also be recorded. Whether or not television was used as an incentive or reward for desired behaviors would follow this same path. All three methods of data collection would provide insight into the rule-setting and control variables. Conclusions would be drawn at the end of the data collection period as to which members of the family appeared to dictate channel selection and under what conditions this control was exhibited.

Subjects' descriptions of their own viewing habits would be compared with a portrayal of their actions perceived on the part of other family

members. This information would be derived directly from interview and survey measures. Double-checks on viewing tastes would be performed during observations.

The decision-making process addressing program selection would probably be most obvious within observation periods. Interviews and survey methods might also provide insight. The presence of one, two, or all family members and their influence on this decision-making process would also be reported on from observation periods.

Patterns of viewing behavior. Indicants of program preference and hours watching would be derived from surveys. The selection process for programming would be derived from interviews and observations. The presence or absence of a television schedule in the home would be noted. Its manner of use by family members would also be noted during observations. The content of outward displays of dialogue between family members watching at the same time would be recorded. Specific attention would be paid to the manner of dialogue. Manner of dialogue would include talk about the program, talk about concurrent activities other than television, or incidental talk.

Knowledge of programming would be determined by all three methods of data collection. The degree of elaboration by subjects concerning specific programming would be recorded both in interview and survey methods. Observations might also reveal a family member's degree of knowledge through any elaborations directed toward specific programs.

Systematic observation of the style in which each family member watched television would also be recorded. Eye contact with the television would be noted during uninterrupted programming. Note would be taken of the manner in which each family member reacted to commercial breaks. Viewing

behavior changes in response to music, sound effects, or changes in volume would also be observed. Observations would also determine whether family members performed viewing as an exclusive activity or occupied themselves with concurrent projects.

Daily activity profiles. Times when family members were available for viewing television would be derived directly from interviews with the researcher. Attention would be paid to those established patterns in the family member's activity profile which prohibit television viewing. Interviews and observation would provide the criteria for this variable.

Media profile. Patterns of alternative media usage would be derived from information each subject provided from surveys. Consistency of these usage patterns would be supported during observation periods. Analysis of alternative media formats would be gathered by the naming of magazines, recent films, radio formats, etc., included within surveys. Comparisons between any stereotypes of alternative media used by the family member would then be contrasted to the program preferences indicated through other surveys.

Where possible, the act of alternative media usage would be observed in an attempt to describe the nature of such behavior. Note would be taken as to whether these behaviors are exclusively devoted to that medium or are accompanied by other activities.

Use of other media in terms of actual time periods would be derived from surveys completed by each family member. Subjects would be queried during interviews as to their medium preference for primary information or news.

Visual and auditory competencies. Visual and auditory scores for a number of selected tests would derive developmental information for family members

aged two to 17. The results from such scores would be compared with the viewing patterns of each child in an attempt to provide postulates as to perceivable differences in viewing style based on developmental stage.

Demographics. Basic demographic data would be provided within the individual interviews framework. Family size would be noted. Viewing areas would be scrutinized as to whether the space provided for viewing accommodated one, two, three, or all family members. Socio-economic status of the family could be derived from overall impressions gained while the researcher was in the home. Living space and material belongings would be incorporated into an overall impression as to the degree of comfort in which the family exists. Impressions of political and religious leanings would also be provided. Where applicable, these impressions would be combined with educational level and other interview data to provide postulates of the decision-making process surrounding television.

Reliability and Validity of Data

Standard concepts of reliability and validity are not applicable when examining procedures suggested in this paper. One of the fundamental problems of reliability when using observational study is that the researcher has no guide as to which part of the behavioral cycle is being examined. Consistency of behavior is impossible to judge because this procedure chooses an arbitrary length of time to observe the social setting.

The attempt within this procedure is to provide internal reliability for the measures employed. The procedural techniques of data collection would be structured so as to be able to invest more credibility in phenomena confirmed from multiple sources. Techniques would be built into the various data collection devices to examine family behavior for more than one instance or utterance. The seven variables under consideration are probed through

three "windows" of data collection. Confidence in these measures would depend upon the number of ways a given phenomenon was presented to the researcher. These three techniques of data collection: (1) interviews, (2) surveys, and (3) observation, are employed to achieve a reliable blend of information for each variable.

The issue was not whether any given measure suggested in this paper is reliable, rather, the purpose is to provide an increasingly accurate approximation of the process under study through the application of a sequence of measurement devices.

Selection of Subjects

Selection of a test family would be conducted on a purely voluntary basis. A letter of introduction would be distributed to an arbitrary section of a local community. Contained within this letter would be an appeal for interested families to contact the researcher for an orientation session. The intent here would be to determine what families are interested enough in the study to allow the researcher to visit their homes for a four-week period. Appointments would then be made with each prospective family following these initial contacts. At these family meetings the researcher would review the nature of and purpose of the study. It would be emphasized that cooperation in the project was completely voluntary and that the family had the option of refusing to continue with the study at any time. Families would be assured that any data gathered would be kept in strictest confidentiality and that references to the family would be anonymous. Also mentioned would be the absence of any physical risks.

Prospective families would then be oriented to the various procedures the researcher would conduct during the four-week period. Family members

would be shown television diaries, program preference and awareness questionnaires. The use of interviews in the study would also be explained, along with their utility in providing feedback for written narratives, media profiles, and daily activity profiles. The family would also be informed that there would be at least one family-group meeting at the end of the data collection period in order to debrief the family of the study's findings.

At the conclusion of this orientation the family would again be asked if they were willing to cooperate with the study. For affirmative answers, the researcher would record simple demographic data on each family member. This would include name, age, schooling, occupation (where applicable), and number of television sets in the home. Families unwilling to cooperate upon completion of the orientation would be thanked for their time.

Procedural Calendar

Week #1--Objectives

1. Initiate interviews with each family member.
2. Gather baseline data for Demographics.
3. Gather data on Perceived Rules and Control of Set Use.
4. Deploy Television Diary for Wednesday to Wednesday period.
5. Distribute questionnaires for Personal Uses of Media.

Week #1--Activities

1. Record and transcribe interviews of Rules and Control of Set Use and baseline Demographics.
2. Recover questionnaires for Personal Uses of Media.
3. Make preliminary hypothesis statements for Demographics, Rules and Controls, and Personal Uses of Media based on data provided from questionnaires and interviews. Establish criteria which provide confirmation for each hypothesis.

Week #2--Objectives

1. Establish Proxemics of television viewing areas.

2. Administer Detroit Tests of Learning Aptitude.

3. Recover Television Diaries.

Week #2--Activities

1. Draw floorplan of television viewing areas.

2. Make preliminary hypothesis statements and consequent confirmation criteria for Proxemics, Visual and Auditory Competencies, and Patterns of Viewing Behavior.

3. Draw data from diary in order to deploy Program Preferences questionnaire.

Week #3--Objectives

1. Distribute Program Preferences questionnaire.

2. Distribute Program Awareness questionnaire.

3. Initiate confirmatory observation period with focus on Proxemics.

4. Initiate confirmatory observation period with focus on Perceived Rules and Control of Set Use.

Week #3--Activities

1. Continue discourse on Patterns of Viewing.

2. Finish discussion of Proxemics.

3. Finish discussion of Perceived Rules and Control of Set Use.

Week #4—Objectives

1. Recover Program Preferences Questionnaires.

2. Recover Program Awareness Questionnaires.

3. Initiate confirmatory observation period with focus on Alternative Uses of Media.

4. Initiate confirmatory observation period with focus on Demographics.

Week #4--Activities

1. Finish extension of discourse on Patterns of Viewing.

2. Finish discussion on Alternative Uses of Media.

3. Finish discussion of Demographics.

Final Meeting

1. Debriefing with Family.

2. Tape and transcribe dicsussion of major findings of study.

The purpose of the debriefing is to allow family members opportunity to provide confirmation for selected aspects of data.

Summary

This paper has been written with two prevailing objectives in mind. The first was to further illuminate the theoretical underpinnings, relatively new to mass communication study, that argue for methodological applications of a more qualitative nature. Previous literature examining the family and television have provided the stepping-stone to process methodologies which take the arena for inquiry directly to the home setting and cover a substantial period of visitation time by the researcher. It is only within this setting that the media ethnomethods of family members can be examined and recorded.

The second phase of this paper has provided a working procedure for the collection of data in natural settings. Specific classifications directing inquiry (variables), have been provided. These parameters are by no means exhaustive; they will no doubt be expanded or modified in their direction and scope after consequent field applications. A built-in check for data gathering has been designed through a process called triangulation, and provides for multiple checks on incoming data from various measures (i.e., interviews, surveys, and observations). Care has been taken to blend,

where possible, enumerative techniques more familiar to our discipline with qualitative techniques in order to provide a growing core of data for the long-range goal of coherent theory building.

The designs of this paper are preliminary, but now provide interested researchers with a schedule of methodological tactics for field testing. The options inherent to qualitative research suggest an ongoing malleability, a reflexivity if you will, allowing the researcher to modify the methodology after each case study. The field testing of this proposal continues at this writing, toward the stated objective of discovering unique and similar uses of television by selected families.

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